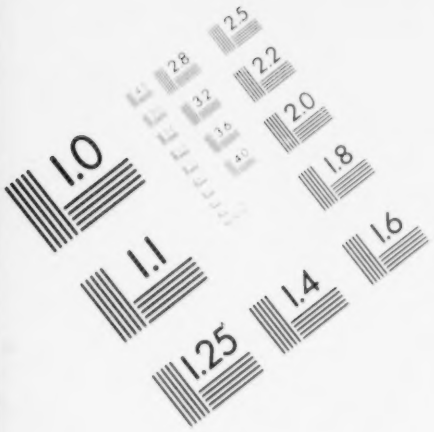
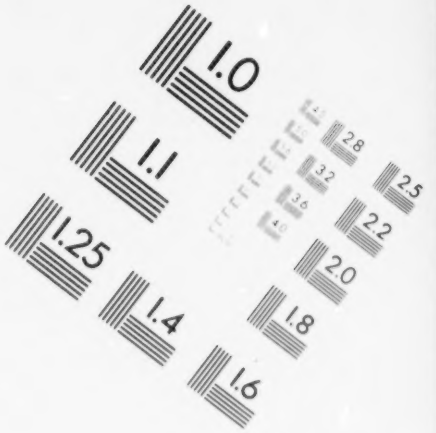


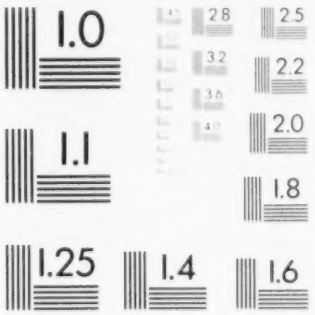
AIIM

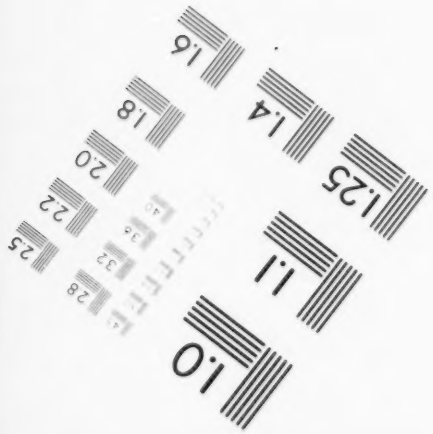
Association for Information and Image Management

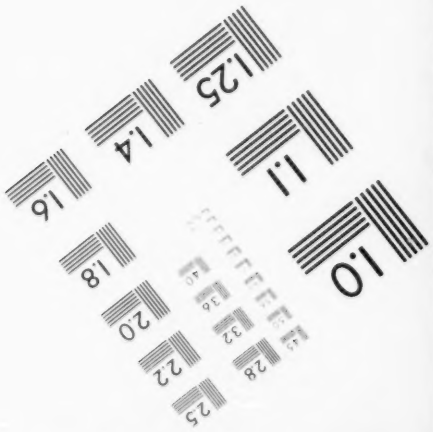
1100 Wayne Avenue, Suite 1100
Silver Spring, Maryland 20910

301/587-8202









MANUFACTURED TO AIIM STANDARDS
BY APPLIED IMAGE, INC.

DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 439 489 EA 030 296

AUTHOR	Friedman, Lawrence B.; Hanson, Matthew
TITLE	Launching Comprehensive School Reform: Early Lessons for State and Federal Policymakers. Policy Issues, September 1999. Issue 3.
INSTITUTION	North Central Regional Educational Lab., Oak Brook, IL.
SPONS AGENCY	Office of Educational Research and Improvement (ED), Washington, DC.
PUB DATE	1999-09-00
NOTE	9p.
PUB TYPE	Reports - Evaluative (142)
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	Comprehensive Programs; *Educational Change; Elementary Secondary Education; Federal Programs; Government School Relationship; Grants; *Improvement Programs; Instructional Improvement
IDENTIFIERS	*Comprehensive School Reform Demonstration Program

ABSTRACT

This publication examines education stakeholders' initial responses to the Comprehensive School Reform Demonstration (CSRD) program in six states in the North Central region of the U.S. Created by Congress in 1997 to help raise student achievement in public schools, the CSRD program is a multi-year initiative that provides financial incentives to encourage schools to adopt comprehensive reforms. The document discusses the effect of the CSRD program on state reform programs, examines schools targeted by the program and how they heard about it, and explores why some schools decided to apply for a CSRD grant and others did not. The findings show that the CSRD program is being launched as intended, and without major disruption to existing processes for providing technical assistance to schools. Rural schools accounted for the fewest number of applicants, and, compared with urban and suburban schools, were the least successful in their bids to obtain CSRD grants. Three factors affected a school's decision about whether to apply for a CSRD grant: (1) its perceptions of the alignment between CSRD and its ongoing school-improvement work; (2) the school's ability to respond to requests for proposals as dictated by limited time and/or staffing resources; and (3) its assessment of the likelihood of winning an award based on school need. (RJM)

Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made
from the original document.

E+

ED 439 489

POLICY ISSUES

Issue 3 September 1999

What can we learn from comprehensive school reform that will make schools more productive producers of high levels of student performance?

About This Issue

The Comprehensive School Reform Demonstration (CSRD) program is now well under way across the country. Schools—with the support of districts, SEAs (state education agencies), and a broad array of technical assistance and model providers—are hard at work demonstrating approaches to comprehensive reform that enable all *students to learn. In February 1998, NCREL began investigating how CSRD was being launched in the North Central Region. This edition of* Policy Issues *examines the initial responses to the CSRD program from the perspectives of SEAs, districts, schools, and comprehensive school reform model providers in six of the seven states in the region: Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Minnesota, Ohio, and Wisconsin. It addresses:*

- *The effect the CSRD program has had on state reform programs.*
- *Which schools were targeted by the program and how they heard about it.*
- *Why some schools decided to apply for a CSRD grant and others did not.*

Policy Issues *provides state and federal policymakers with timely information on the initial stages of CSRD's implementation so that during the next state and federal funding cycles they may build on the program's strengths and consider improvements based on data.*

Launching Comprehensive School Reform: Early Lessons for State and Federal Policymakers

By Lawrence B. Friedman and Matthew Hanson

Introduction

In 1997, Congress created the Comprehensive School Reform Demonstration program to help raise student achievement in public schools across the country. CSRD (also known as Obey-Porter, after the congressmen from Wisconsin and Illinois, respectively, who authored the legislation) is a multiyear federal initiative to reorganize and revitalize entire schools, especially those most in need of improvement. The program's purpose is to provide financial incentives for schools to implement comprehensive reforms that address virtually all aspects of schooling and are based on reliable research and effective practices.[1] Its purpose is *not* to pay the full cost for schools to undertake comprehensive school reform, but to provide a catalyst for schools to do so, leveraging all of their resources. First, the CSRD program helps schools identify, select, and implement effective school reform models that are based on reliable research and effective practices and that best match the learning needs of the students. These models must meet nine components of comprehensive school reform (see page 2).

Inside This Issue:

Funding 2
CSR Models and Criteria 2
Significance of the CSRD Program. 3
Summary of Key Findings 3
Policy Recommendations 5
Executive Summary Fax Sheet 7

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)
This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.
Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

EA 030296

NCREL
North Central Regional Educational Laboratory

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Nine Components of Comprehensive School Reform

1. Employ innovative strategies and proven methods for student learning, teaching, and school management that are based on reliable research and effective practices, and have been replicated successfully in schools with diverse characteristics
2. Have a comprehensive design for effective school functioning—including instruction, assessment, classroom management, professional development, parental involvement, and school management—that aligns the school's curriculum, technology, and professional development into a schoolwide reform plan designed to enable all students to meet challenging state content and performance standards, and that addresses needs identified through a school needs assessment
3. Provide high-quality and continuous teacher and staff professional development
4. Have measurable goals for student performance and benchmarks for meeting those goals
5. Are supported by school faculty, administrators, and staff
6. Provide for the meaningful involvement of parents and the local community in planning and implementing school improvement activities
7. Utilize high-quality external technical support and assistance from a comprehensive school reform entity (which may be a university) with experience or expertise in schoolwide reform and improvement
8. Include a plan for the evaluation of the implementation of school reforms and the student results achieved
9. Identify how other resources (federal/state/local/private) available to the school will be used to coordinate services to support and sustain the school reform effort

Source: U.S. House Report No. 390, 105th Congress, 1st Session

Second, the CSRD program supports continuous professional development of school staff to implement a specific comprehensive school reform design. And, third, it supports high-quality, ongoing technical assistance from states, districts, and external experts in schoolwide reform.

Funding

In the first year of the CSRD program (1997), $145 million[2] was allocated nationally to SEAs to provide competitive incentive grants for schools choosing to pursue comprehensive reform. Of these funds, $120 million was earmarked for Title I schools only and $25 million for Title I *or* nonTitle I schools. Thus, states were awarded grants based on their share of all Title I Basic Grants and school-aged children. In turn, SEAs awarded grants of at least $50,000 (renewable for an additional two years) to LEAs (local education agencies) for schools ready to implement comprehensive reforms. During this process, SEAs were encouraged to give competitive preferences to schools:

1. That were identified as in need of improvement under Title I.
2. That were launching, rather than extending, comprehensive reform programs in their schools.
3. Whose applications included effective, research-based, externally developed models.
4. Whose districts showed a commitment to helping schools reallocate existing resources for comprehensive reform.

As of July 1999, all CSRD allocations had been awarded to states. By the fall of 1999, approximately 2,500 schools will have been selected nationally to receive funding to implement comprehensive school reform programs (see Figure 1).

CSR Models and Criteria

Under the CSRD program, schools may implement one of two kinds of comprehensive school reform models: those that have been externally developed or those that have been developed by schools that receive awards.

Forty-four externally developed models are summarized in a catalog produced by the Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory (NWREL).[3] Twenty-six of these are whole-school reform models, 17 of which are referenced specifically in the comprehensive school reform legislation as models that have brought about gains in student performance in schools across the country. Schools may also choose to implement their own locally developed initiative or one that combines elements of several externally developed models, as long as it is based on rigorous research and addresses the nine components of comprehensive school reform.[4] In every state in the North Central

Region, the nine components of comprehensive school reform were incorporated into SEAs' frameworks for judging the merit of schools' applications. Additional criteria included district-level program evaluation and technical assistance strategies (required by the federal legislation) and how well the comprehensive school reform model or initiative selected by schools aligned with state and district improvement plans.

Figure 1

Individual Allocations to States in the North Central Region

The seven states in the North Central Region will receive approximately 17 percent of the total federal expenditure.

Illinois	$6,366,143
Indiana	$2,421,650
Iowa	$1,150,020
Michigan	$6,126,300
Minnesota	$1,901,697
Ohio	$5,878,934
Wisconsin	$2,639,712
Total	**$26,484,456**

Range of Awards Nationally:
$321,104–$16,152,467

Source: www.ed.gov/offices/OESE/compreform/table99.html

Significance of the CSRD Program

The CSRD program is significant because:

- It is both connected to and is a departure from other major state and federal reform initiatives.
- It has strong roots in Title I (and may influence aspects of its reauthorization) in that it includes essential schoolwide components, such as professional development, parent and community involvement, and the coordination of technical assistance and other kinds of resources.
- It focuses on raising standards and providing resources for *all* students rather than on the implementation of interventions targeted at specific groups of children (e.g., Head Start). This shift recognizes that schools and communities are best suited to determine and coordinate resources in response to local needs.
- SEAs and LEAs play a central role by providing schools with information and support to help them make sound data-driven decisions about how to implement comprehensive school reform.

Due to the significance of this initiative, NCREL has studied how the CSRD program has been launched in six states in the North Central Region.

Key findings summarized below also draw upon NCREL's knowledge and experience in providing technical assistance to schools and agencies throughout the region during the launching of the CSRD program.

Summary of Key Findings

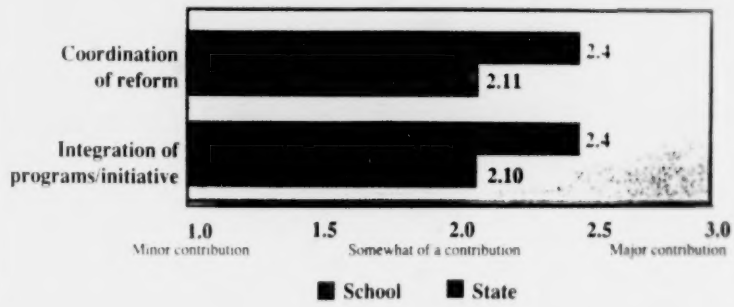
What effect does CSRD have on states' existing school reform programs and the structures that support them?

New federal programs intended to leverage schoolwide improvement offer promising opportunities for schools and communities. However, their introduction can be somewhat disruptive to ongoing reform work in schools and place added demands on the agencies that serve them. Federal programs, such as CSRD, often charge districts and state education agencies with managing grant application procedures, overseeing program implementation and evaluation, and providing schools with technical assistance. In addition, the CSRD program creates new and intensified demands on model providers: Can they equitably meet increased demands for their services while sustaining the quality of the services they provide? The launching of any new federal school reform initiative may affect (1) how SEAs think about and conduct statewide competitions, (2) how SEAs disseminate information and technical support to schools, and (3) the degree to which work initiated under a new program can be coordinated with ongoing school improvement efforts.

NCREL found that the CSRD program is being launched in states as intended, and without major disruption to existing structures and processes for providing technical assistance to schools. In fact, all interviewed SEA representatives indicated that the CSRD program complemented existing state and federal initiatives, such as Goals 2000 and Title I. Such strong programmatic links have facilitated state-level coordination of funding and staffing. Some SEAs have also indicated that the CSRD program had a significant impact on how they think about the nature of statewide competitions and the processes that are necessary to provide technical assistance, monitor program implementation, and evaluate program outcomes. For example, some SEAs have incorporated comprehensive school reform grant application procedures into their review process for other state and federal grants.

Some representatives of the SEAs believe that the contribution of the CSRD program to ongoing school reform work will be greatest at the school level (see Table 1). This, in fact, was the intent of the federal legislation, which gives schools and districts considerable autonomy in making decisions that effect the coordination of resources and the integration of school reform programs. This aspect of the CSRD program certainly warrants further inquiry as schools begin to implement their chosen reform models.

Table 1: SEAs' Perceptions of the Potential Contribution of CSRD to State and School Reform Efforts



Which schools were targeted by the CSRD program?

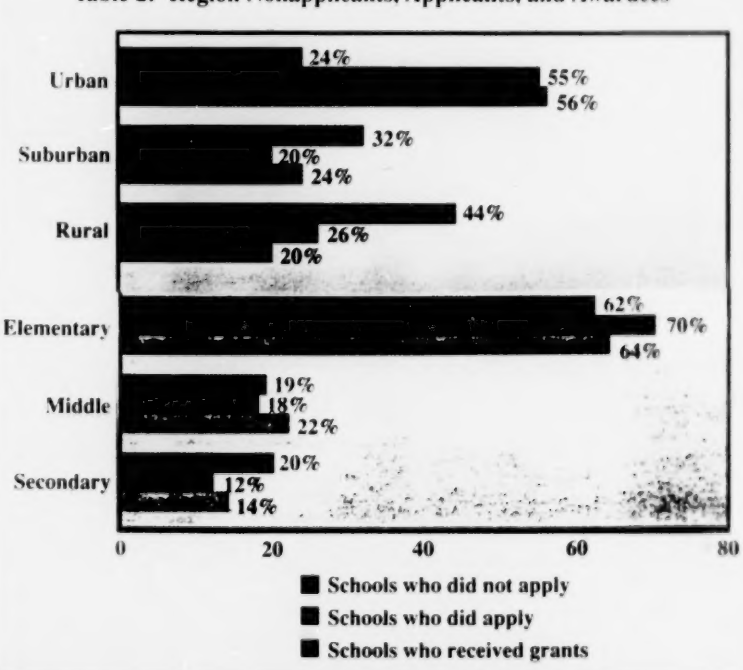
The primary purpose of the CSRD program is to spur schoolwide change in schools with the greatest need to improve student achievement. The federal legislation that created the CSRD program requires states to target districts whose schools receive Title I funds. The evidence collected in NCREL's early implementation study indicates that this goal has been met in the North Central Region's first round of competitions: 83 percent of all schools applying and 89 percent of all awardees receive Title I funds. These percentages approximate the proportion of total CSRD dollars that have been allocated to Title I schools nationwide.

Regional analyses of applicants and awardees (shown in Table 2) show that schools in urban and elementary grade-level categories accounted for the greatest proportion of all applicants: nearly 55 and 70 percent, respectively. These proportions are substantially greater than the actual percentages for urban schools, and somewhat greater for elementary schools in the region. Conversely, when the proportion of applicant schools relative to all schools in each geographic locale and grade-level category is considered, secondary and rural schools accounted for the fewest number of applicants. Rural schools in the region were the least successful in their bids to obtain CSRD grants compared to urban and suburban schools. Twenty-nine percent of all rural schools that applied received grants versus 38 percent of urban schools and 45 percent of suburban schools.

How and when did schools hear about CSRD?

Success in launching the federal CSRD program depends in no small measure on the effectiveness of states' and districts' structures for disseminating important information about the program and reform models to schools. Thus, three important issues arise: (1) when schools first heard about the program in relation

Table 2: Region Nonapplicants, Applicants, and Awardees[a]



BEST COPY AVAILABLE

to their state's deadlines for applications, (2) how they learned about the CSRD program, and (3) whether they felt they had enough time and information to make sound decisions regarding application.

NCREL found that SEAs were able to effectively launch the CSRD program in their states without having to reinvent the wheel. SEAs primarily disseminated information about the program and school reform models through a combination of mailings, state-sponsored meetings, conferences, and "design fairs" that showcased various comprehensive reform models. In addition, Web sites sponsored by NCREL and other regional educational laboratories, the National Association of School Principals, the American Association of School Administrators, and various model providers were also cited as sources of information that were helpful to schools.

According to the principals interviewed, these resources, as well as established state networks (e.g., those composed of Title I schools) and contact with model providers, helped their schools learn more about CSRD, consider the pros and cons of applying, and develop applications. In short, the vast majority of principals who were interviewed felt they had sufficient information about the program and the various comprehensive school reform models that were available to them.

Based on NCREL's interviews with principals in applicant schools, schools across the region had, on average, over five months to research their needs, the program, and possible models, and to develop their applications.[4] Nevertheless, fifty-six percent of the principals in nonapplicant schools that were contacted by NCREL indicated either that they had not heard about the CSRD program or did not recall hearing about it. To the extent that the CSRD program represents a key component of states' current and future reform agendas, policymakers may need to consider ways to increase schools' interest in and access to information about the program.

CSR seemed [like] it would help in looking at ourselves and reaching our goals. For example, getting students' reading writing, and math performance at or above grade level.

—Principal, urban Title I elementary school

Why did schools apply? Why didn't others?

Two subjects of interest to policymakers and other key stakeholders of the CSRD program are (1) the reasons schools cited for applying for a CSRD grant and (2) the factors that affected nonparticipants' decisions not to apply. Answers to these questions have strong implications for how policymakers and state agencies adjust the types and level of information and support they provide schools during application periods.

When asked why their schools had applied for CSRD funding, many principals indicated the general need to raise students' reading and math test scores. More specific intended uses of CSRD resources included restructuring their schools and/or its schedule (e.g., to support "block" scheduling), creating more professional development opportunities for all staff, and increasing students' access to educational technology. The majority of principals reported that the program appears to provide additional support for and a "good fit" with many schools' ongoing schoolwide reform activities.

Conversely, many principals in nonapplicant schools indicated that the program did not fit with their ongoing reform efforts, or that they and their staff were too busy or short-handed, or both, to devote either the time or resources necessary for developing a competitive CSRD grant application. Some indicated that their district did not have a grant writer who could assist them. Others said that they did not feel they had a good chance of being awarded a grant because their school was not located in a high-poverty area and/or that their test scores were too high.

Policy Recommendations

The findings provide evidence that the CSRD program is working much as it should in the North Central Region. The program is being targeted to the kinds of schools for whom it was intended and is being implemented without major disruption to existing state programs and processes. In some cases, SEAs have reported that the CSRD program is actually *complementary* to existing state programs and processes. It appears that schools are using information provided by SEAs, LEAs, and model providers in combination with their own assessments of need to make rational, informed choices about whether the CSRD program is right for them. Nevertheless, NCREL's investigation of the launching of the CSRD program in six states in the North Central Region has raised policy issues that could be considered as potential options for improving the application process and/or the opportunities for prospective schools to obtain CSRD grants. Three recommendations for federal policymakers are presented first. These are followed by one recommendation for federal and state policymakers and two for state policymakers.

Recommendations for federal policymakers

- **Provide ongoing incentives to states and districts to build and maintain regional and state support networks. These networks should include SEAs, LEAs, regional labs, and federally and state-funded technical assistance providers.**

  The early implementation of CSRD in the Midwest has provided new opportunities for networking and collaboration within and among states and districts. For instance, SEAs, at NCREL's urging, have shared and used aspects of each other's frameworks in developing their state and local applications. In the coming years as school- and district-level implementation move forward, there will be more opportunities to do this and to share technical assistance and evaluation strategies. NCREL encourages states, model providers, and other supporting agencies to develop, use, and sustain networks that facilitate the transfer of information and experience.

- **Ensure that CSRD plans for reform link with and complement state and local education priorities.**

  The good alignment with state and local reform initiatives must be preserved.

- **Commission an assessment of participation levels in rural schools and how their access to the CSRD program can be strengthened.**

  Findings from NCREL's examination of CSRD program implementation in the region indicate that rural schools may not have been targeted as heavily during their respective state's CSRD grant competitions. The small number of externally developed models that have been successfully implemented in rural schools and secondary schools may be one reason schools in these categories were less inclined to participate and/or were less successful in state competitions. Yet another reason might be that rural schools, given their remote locale, may have less access to adequate technical assistance and other resources that could be used to enhance the likelihood of receiving an award.

We feel that we are doing a lot of things on our own and didn't feel the need to go after the [CSRD] grant.

—Principal, suburban Title I middle school

Recommendation for federal and state policymakers

- **Articulate the criteria necessary to make judgments about the effectiveness of comprehensive reform programs that may contribute to gains in student outcomes.**

  The success of the CSRD program will ultimately be measured in terms of whether it increases students' academic achievement. As the second year of the CSRD program begins, more and more stakeholders will want to know about the program's progress and early signs of success.

Recommendations for state policymakers

- **Consider funding alternative support systems and technical assistance providers within the states that can act as design consultants or external change facilitators to schools undergoing reform.**

  Schools are busy places. It is not uncommon for schools to be engaged in multiple reform initiatives. Also, the finding that principals in more than one-half of the nonapplicant schools contacted had either never heard about the program or did not recall hearing about it suggests that the CSRD program is competing for administrators' time and attention. To attract more schools to the program, one option might be to expand the role played by districts and/or intermediate educational agencies (IEAs). Districts and IEAs might be used to leverage and/or provide direct support for developing planning grants or conducting schoolwide needs assessments.

- **Provide incentives for model providers and technical assistance providers to work in rural districts.**

  The data collected to date in the North Central Region suggest that schools in rural districts may be less inclined to participate in state CSRD competitions (and perhaps less able to compete successfully in them) than schools in urban and suburban areas.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Executive Summary
The Comprehensive School Reform Program

FAX SHEET

In 1997, Congress created the Comprehensive School Reform Demonstration (CSRD) program to help raise student achievement in public schools across the country. The CSRD program is a multiyear federal initiative to reorganize and revitalize entire schools by providing financial incentives for schools to adopt comprehensive school reforms that address virtually all aspects of schooling and are based on reliable research and effective practices.

Key Findings From NCREL's Investigation

- The CSRD program is being launched in states in the North Central Region as intended, and without major disruption to existing structures and processes for providing technical assistance to schools.

- Rural schools accounted for the fewest number of applicants and, compared to urban and suburban schools, were the least successful in their bids to obtain CSRD grants.

- Three factors appear to affect a school's decisions about whether to apply for a CSRD grant: (1) its perceptions of the alignment between CSRD and its ongoing school improvement work; (2) the degree to which the school's ability to respond to state requests for proposals is constrained by limited time and/or staffing resources; and (3) its assessment of the likelihood of winning awards based on school need.

NCREL's Policy Recommendations

- **Provide incentives to states and districts to build and maintain regional and state support networks.** The early implementation of CSRD has provided new opportunities for networking and collaborating within and among states and districts. In the future, there will be more opportunities to do this and to share technical assistance and evaluation strategies.

- **Ensure that CSRD plans for reform link with and complement state and local education priorities.** The good alignment with state and local reform initiatives must be preserved.

- **Commission an assessment of participation levels in rural schools and how their access to the CSRD program can be strengthened.** Lack of rural participation or success in state competitions may be due to the small number of externally developed models that have been successfully implemented in rural schools or to the schools' remote locale, which may mean less access to adequate technical assistance and other resources.

- **Articulate the criteria necessary to make judgments about the effectiveness of comprehensive reform programs.** The success of the CSRD program will ultimately be measured in terms of whether it produces increases in students' academic achievement. As the second year of the CSRD program begins, more and more stakeholders will want to know about the program's progress and early signs of success.

- **Consider funding alternative support systems and technical assistance providers within the states that can act as design consultants or external change facilitators to schools undergoing reform.** To attract more schools to the program, consider expanding the role played by districts and/or intermediate educational agencies. They could be used to leverage and/or provide direct support for developing planning grants or conducting schoolwide needs assessments.

- **Provide incentives for model providers and technical assistance providers to work in rural districts.** Data collected suggest that schools in rural districts may be less inclined to participate in state CSRD competitions than schools in urban and suburban areas.

For more inforamtion contact:

North Central Regional Educational Laboratory
1900 Spring Road, Suite 300
Oak Brook, IL 60523-1480
800-356-2735
www.ncrel.org/csri/

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Endnotes

1 Conference Report accompanying the Appropriations Act. H.R. 309, 105th Cong., 1st Sess. (1997).

2 The total CSRD allocation was $150 million. The legislation also made available $1 million for the U.S. Department of Education "to identify research-based approaches to comprehensive reform that show the most promise of meeting the objectives of the initiative, and to disseminate that information to SEAs, LEAs, and schools so they can make informed choices about what strategies will work best in their communities" (House Report No. 105-309). The legislation made available $4 million for the regional educational laboratories to support the initiative's implementation.

3 *The Catalog of School Reform Models: First Edition* was developed by NWREL in 1997 to support schools, school districts, states, and others as they proceed with their work under the Obey-Porter CSRDP. It provides information on 26 whole-school reform models and 18 skill- and content-based models. The latter have not been included in the present analyses.

4 For more information, see *Comprehensive School Reform: Making Good Choices—A Guide for Schools and Districts* (NCREL, 1998).

5 Representatives from SEAs, districts, schools, and model providers were surveyed, interviewed by telephone, or both, between March 1998 and May 1999. Data about schools were also analyzed during this period.

6 Thirty-one SEA representatives whose responsibilities included oversight of the CSRD program in their respective states responded to these survey items.

7 Locale and grade-level categories are based on criteria applied to The Common Core of Data, National Center of Education Statistics, Washington, DC.

8 All 78 Chicago Public Schools that applied for CSRD grants were funded. Due to Illinois's specific strategy to target these urban schools, they have been excluded from the analysis shown in this chart.

9 This information was determined by calculating the interval between the time principals heard about the CSRD program and when applications were due in their respective states. Variations based on schools' locale (urban, suburban, and rural) or grade level (elementary, middle, and secondary) did not reach the level of statistical significance.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Launching Comprehensive School Reform: Some Early Lessons

NCREL
North Central Regional Educational Laboratory
1900 Spring Road, Suite 300
Oak Brook, IL 60523-1480

Non-Profit Org.
U.S. Postage
PAID
Permit No. 6784
Chicago, IL